

The Embos and Alejandro

Here are the reviews of two weekend shows, which will run in tomorrow's Preview, with photos. Thanks to the onlookers who helped with the Micronotz' very brief set list.

The Embarrassment with the Mortal Micronotz and Kill Creek

Aug. 20 at Liberty Hall



For a few awkward moments, it seemed like this reunion wasn't going to be what everyone hoped it would be: a celebration of a beloved but obscure band.

Several songs into its two-hour set, the Embarrassment seemed on the verge of living up to its name. A sluggish start came to a complete halt when a string snapped on Bill Goffrier's guitar. That prompted lead singer John Nichols to recommend that fans use the bathroom or visit the bar while he and the two other Embos waited on stage for Goffrier to return with a fully dressed guitar.

When he did, they jumped into "Wellsville," as good a song as any in their catalog, and like a groggy boxer after a whiff of smelling salts, the band shook off the cobwebs and started living up to its reputation. Nearly two hours later, especially during the jailbreak version of "Sex Drive," it felt like old times again.

You had to be there. And you had to have been there, too, more than 25 years ago, in the punk/post-punk era when the Embarrassment excited people who get excited about music launched from the underground.



Sunday, that excitement was stoked by a brief surprise appearance by the Mortal Micronotz, a short-lived punk band from Lawrence that once collaborated with William S. Burroughs (and if you've never heard his cover of "Old Lady Sloan," with the Eudoras, do yourself a favor).

This version included original singer Dean Lubensky and his successor, Jay Hauptli, original guitarist John Harper and longtime drummer Steve Eddy. Matt Kesler, now of the Doo-Dads but formerly of the Pedaljets, filled in on bass for the late David Dale.

The Micronotz played three songs: "Feels Right," "40 Fingers" and a cover of Iggy Pop's "I Got A Right." A devotee later reported that the 'notz played that song at their first show ever, which was an opening slot for the Embarrassment. It was that kind of crowd: scores of diehard fans and former scenesters (about 400 of them) roiling with memories and well-versed in facts and precious tiny details.

The night started with a reunion set from Kill Creek, a '90s band that hadn't played together in a long while. "This isn't your father's Kill Creek," said lead singer Scott Born. "Well, maybe it is." Like the Embarrassment, it was running through and into a few rough spots — venial mishaps their fans smoothed over with lots of applause and sing-alongs.

The best parts of the Embarrassment's set were its best and best-known songs: "Celebrity Art Party," "Wellsville," "Patio Set," "Two Cars," "Elizabeth Montgomery's Face," "Two-Week

Vacation” and “Sex Drive.” Nichols’ voice got better as the night wore on; Goffrier’s guitar playing was impressive all night.

The finale, four cover songs, was as impressive as what preceded it: Nichols, Goffrier and drummer Brent “Woody” Geissmann gathered around the mic for an unplugged version of “Ron Klaus Wrecked His House,” a song Goffrier wrote for Big Dipper, his post-Embarrassment band. Then Klaus came back on stage, Geissmann took his seat behind the drums and the Embos had their way with “On Broadway.” After that: their dissident deconstruction of “Don’t Stop,” the Michael Jackson hit, a straight cover of the Seeds’ “Pushin’ Too Hard” and then a lacerating version of Iggy’s “I Wanna Be Your Dog.”

Then they lined up and took deep bows, looking as satisfied and spent as everyone on the floor before them.

Setlist: Celebrity Art Party, Lifespan, Careen, Wellsville, Godfrey Harold Hardy, Don Juan, Patio Set, Special Eyes, Podman, D-Rings, Two-Week Vacation, Chapter 12, Train of Thought, Two Cars, Elizabeth Montgomery’s Face, Death Travels West, Drive Me to the Park, Sex Drive. **Encore:** Ron Klaus Wrecked His House, On Broadway, Don’t Stop, Pushin’ Too Hard, I Wanna Be Your Dog.

| *Timothy Finn, The Star*